AN ACCOUNT OF THE SPIRITS

Working upon the minds of Men, in the ſeveral Ages of the CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

IN A

Viſitation Sermon,

BEFORE

The Right Reverend Father in God, *HENRY* Lord Biſhop of *London*; at *Burntwood* in *Eſſex*, Septemb. 14. 1680.

BY

RICHARD HOLLINGWORTH, M. A. Vicar of *Weſt-Ham*, near *London*.

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A Visitation Sermon

UPON

Acts 2. 17, 18. *And it shall come to pass in the last days (saith God) I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and your Sons and your Daughters shall Prophesie, and your young men shall see Visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.*

And on my Servants, and on my Hand maidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall Prophesie.

IT is a very great kindness as well as justice that we owe to our judgments and understandings, to lodge nothing in them but what is agreeable to Truth and Reason; but what can be accounted for when we are called before others to vindicate our selves; but what is in its consequences and effects really advantageous to the needs and necessities, as well as to the pleasures and delights of the Soul. And those men that are easily imposed upon, and suffer themselves to be disposed of, either by the Rhetorick or Flattery of others, they are very false and treacherous to that excellent Being which God hath given them.

And amongst many other truths, in which the soul of man ought carefully to concern it self, I think, and that I am sure, not without proper grounds, the Notion of the Spirit of God is one, the not understanding whereof aright, hath had as pernicious an influence upon the Church of God as any thing History informs us of, and to reckon up the several evils that have sprung from hence, would be an endless piece of work. From hence have arisen debates and strifes, which have not had their period without loss of life, as well as reputation: from hence have men grown proud and sawcy, and adopted all the silly and groundless conceits of their own brains into the fundamental and absolute necessaries of Religion, and have been hugely troublesome to all the Neighbourhood, if with an equal zeal they would not as well propagate and spread abroad, as suck in their fancies and sickly imaginations. From hence have arisen those separations of men from one another, and that with the vilest reflections upon each other that could be; calling, nay dooming each other as limbs of Antichrist, and spawn of Hell, as persons that stand in a direct opposition to the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus, and with all might endeavouring the utter ruin and extirpation of one another: Yea, in a word, the quarrels about the Spirit have run so high, and men have conceited themselves so acted by it, that they have altered, as far as they could, the very nature of things, and have made those things lawful by necessity and providence, which Scripture and right Reason have determined before hand as utterly unlawful.

Witness the Murther of the late King.

And therefore certainly it stands us all in stead to set this Notion right in our heads, that so we may not fall into those inconveniencies, which a wrong apprehension

prehension of it is naturally attended with. In order to which piece of service, I have made choice of these words, and my business from them is to shew what Spirit it is that hath been enjoyed in the Gospel, and by vertue of its appearance in the world; where we will consider the necessity of different administrations of the same Spirit, and the great mistakes those men labour under, who expect or vapour of the same powerful and immediate helps and assistances now, that the Apostles and Disciples of our Lord were so plentifully furnished withal at their first setting out, in order to the settlement of Christianity in the world; and for the better carrying on this great design, we will consider these several things.

1. What Spirit it was that the Apostles had after the descent of the Holy Ghost. Now it is plain that the Spirit of the Apostles was suitable to the great Errand they were sent about, to the great work they were to finish, for as the case was extraordinary, so was the Spirit that assisted them: and therefore we find they were able to work Miracles, the great attestation to any truth whatsoever, and which God hath all along used upon great occasions; they were able to speak with tongues, such as they were as much unacquainted withal before, as a new-born Babe is with the language of his Countrey. They had the gift of discerning Spirits, with many other things which were mighty necessary, considering what they went about; for their Errand was to pull down the Model of the Jewish worship, a great part whereof had been set up by God himself; to take down the pale, whereby the Jews had for many hundred years been peculiarly separated from the rest of the world, and upon which account they valued themselves above the rest of the world: They were to convince

them that their Sacrifices did ceaſe, and conſequently the Temple of *Jeruſalem* muſt be frequented under other Notions, and upon other accounts than it was when their ceremonial ſervice was in being; and you that know the force of education, muſt needs acknowledge this was hard work, and needed great courage, and as great an evidence of the truth of their Commiſſion. For when new things are to be ſetled in the room of ſomething that was fixed before by a Divine Warrant, it had need of ſome peculiar excellency in its nature, or ſome more than ordinary evidence, before it ought to have any admittance amongſt the Sons of men, for things well founded, ought not upon eaſie terms to be overturned. And therefore upon this account, the Goſpel being ſent on purpoſe to make void the Law of *Moſes* ſo far as it was Judicial or Ceremonial; and the Law having been ſetled by God himſelf, there was great reaſon that ſuch as were the immediate inſtruments of ſo great an undertaking, ſhould have a proportionable commiſſion and ſtrength to do it with.

And as the Apoſtles ſtood in need of this extraordinary Spirit upon the *Jews* account, ſo alſo upon the *Gentiles*; who, though they were Servants to a falſe Religion, yet they believed not ſo, and conſequently it muſt needs be a very hard task to unfix them, and bring them to an impartial conſideration of thoſe convincing proofs the Apoſtles gave of their being ſent by God. They were trained up in the worſhiping of ſuch Gods as did no ways oblige them to any engagement againſt their Luſts; nay, the worſhipping of whom was in part a fulfilling of their luſts; and as we find over all thoſe parts of the preſent world, that are miſtaken in the objects of their worſhip; ſo no doubt it was then, they had a mighty fond eſteem for

their Idols, and were ready to judge, and that with the greateſt ſeverity, every perſon that did not bow down to them. And Oh, how hard a thing it was then for the Apoſtles to conteſt with prejudices founded in education, in principles ſucked from thoſe they loved moſt, to wit, their Parents: and therefore upon this account there was great need of an extraordinary Spirit, whereby men might be convinced of the truth of their perſons as well as their doctrins: Alas, had it not been for this, the Goſpel would have been nipped in its firſt budding forth, and it would have been a downright impoſſibility for ſo great a part of the world to have been impoſed upon by ſuch a company of illiterate perſons as the Apoſtles, before the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt were.

Can you imagine that ſuch Learned men as *Dionyſius* the *Areopagite*, and other perſons brought up in the Schools at *Athens*, who well underſtood the principles and connexion of things, would have ſubmitted to the pretences of ſuch bold and rude perſons, who could ſhew no reaſon at all beyond their own confident aſſertions for what they ſaid? No, it was impoſſible. And by the way, this one thing ſhews the great neceſſity of human Learning, and is a ſufficient confutation of all thoſe *Enthuſiaſts* who do revile it; to wit, that what the Apoſtles wanted of it, upon the ſcore of education, God ſupplied by Miracle. Well but

2. Let us conſider how long this extraordinary Spirit continued in the Church; for that it is ceaſed, and that no man can now pretend to it, is a plain caſe, becauſe we daily experience it: for he that pretends to the ſame ſpirit the Apoſtles had, muſt do the ſame things, or elſe he is mighty vain, and argues his underſtanding to be much impaired.

Now

Now in answer to this, it is certain that God, who is never wanting to what he promises, nor to those needs and necessities which his wisdom and goodness conspire to answer, was not wanting to his Church in the first Ages thereof, so long as they had any work to do, like to what first they set upon; that is, so long as they had new Countreys or People to spread this Gospel abroad amongst: And therefore we find in History that this extraordinary Spirit continued more or less for about 400 years in the Church of God, and men wrought Miracles, and thereby convinced Gainsayers; though about that time, as St. *Augustin* tells us, they were not so numerous and plentiful as they were before; and the reason was, because there was no such need of them, and a little after they ceased. And this we may assert, notwithstanding the boasts of the Church of *Rome*, who indeed, instead of confirming men in the Christian Religion, by their pretended miracles, do, if men be considerate, rather expose it to their scorn and censure, so ridiculous are the stories they tell, and upon such slight and pitiful grounds do they pretend their Miracles are wrought. And therefore, I say, when the occasion and reason of working Miracles ceased, then God in Wisdom suspended that great and mighty power wherewith he had accompanied good men before; and Kings proving Nursing-fathers, and Queens Nursing-mothers to the Church, the Gospel being a National Religion in most Countreys, and that which youth was brought up in at first; and there being so full an evidence on its side, taken from the purity of its doctrine, the innocence of its design, the multitude of Miracles that awaited its first appearance, and other concurring testimonies of equal force; therefore men are now to look for no other Spirit but what

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is necessary for their needs and necessities as they are Christians, which brings me to the third thing to be considered of, and that is

3ly. Notwithstanding the ceasing of this extraordinary Spirit, yet there is a Spirit continued to the Church of God sufficiently helpful to men, suitable to their necessities, and to what God requires of them, in order to be partakers of his blessings. God is never behind-hand with his Creatures, but his Providence stands ready to assist them with such Auxiliary forces as they really stand in need of, and no man shall ever complain that he perishes for lack of any thing that God hath promised; the death of men must be laid at their own doors, and had they not been wanting to themselves, Heaven had been their portion, and the lot of their Inheritance: and as God said to *Israel*, so he may say to all Christians whatsoever, *O you Sons of men, you have destroyed your selves.*

And now we enter into a large field of discourse, and I wish my thoughts and meditations may do justice and right to the matter under hand, and withal answer your expectation in a thing so really momentous and concerning. I say then, that though God hath thought good to withdraw the extraordinary Spirit, yet he is with his Church and People to the end of the World, by affording them such assistances as are requisite for their serving of him.

And this is a Doctrine that hath so universally obtained in the Church of God, that the *Pelagian* Heresie was early condemned by the Church: That Heresie that asserts Man by the strength of his faculties, improved by Scripture and Reason, by the objective evidence that is in things, might attain to such a state of mind, as to render him fit for Gods favour while here, and his eternal glory hereafter.

But

But though this was a Doctrin generally acknowledged, yet for all that, the mistakes about the Spirit of God, the confounding the extraordinary and ordinary spirit, the misinterpreting several places of Scripture, which speak of the effusion of the Spirit in the last days, particularly that of my Text, the setting up of the Spirit in opposition to human Learning, and the exercise of our Reason; the patronizing of our own folly and wickedness, by pretences to a more immediate guidance and direction of the Spirit of God: I say these things have done a world of mischief to Religion and civil Society together; they have forced men out of their proper places, and been the original of so much pride and vanity of spirit, that Children as it were have risen up against the Ancients, and every Novice hath taken upon him to pitty his betters, and to be a director of the People; and therefore certainly it is a thing of great concernment to every man, to set this Notion right in his mind, that so he may not, like every little Child, be tossed too and fro with every wind of doctrin, and that his judgment may not be enslaved to every bold pretender that covers a Woolfish nature with Sheeps cloathing.

Now that Spirit which awaits good men in this world, give me leave to give you this account of, which if but well considered, will (I am certain) strengthen you against all those addresses that sin or errour at any time make to you.

1. The Spirit which now assists good men in this life, works upon them according to what they know; it brings no new Notices of things to them, but operates upon those they by their own labour and industry have collected and got together. For did it assist us not only with strength and resolution of mind

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to adhere to what we know, but with the knowledge of things themselves, without any inquiries of our own, all labour and diligence would be discouraged, and he that lived the most idle life, might be improved to as due apprehensions of things, as the most studious and solitary person whatsoever; which if any man can give me an evidence of, I will let go this first assertion: but if I hold it till I meet with such an instance, I believe I shall die of the same opinion I am now of. And therefore those men that pretend to new lights, to more glorious discoveries, to more large manifestations of the mind and will of God than former Ages have been acquainted with, why these men run up and down the World with a pretence, whereby they may indeed make the silly world mad, but I am sure they will never make it wiser or better, for there is no such thing as new Lights; and when the New Testament was sealed up, God cursed any man that added to the words of that Book, and he had certainly been wanting to his Church, if they had wanted any necessary to salvation, which he hath since revealed.

No, no, I say again, the Spirit of God now brings no new things, but its business is to set the old ones upon our hearts and souls, to strengthen our good purposes for an holy life, to enlighten our dark faculties, whereby we may see the beauty and excellency of those Divine objects that are proposed to our understandings, and to excite our affections to a love agreeable to the worth and value of those things, in which our souls are more immediately concerned; and if any man appear, let him by looks and winks pretend to never so much Heavenly-mindedness, yet I say, if the man appear amongst you with promises of further discoveries of the way and Kingdom of

the Lord Jesus, than the Christian world hath yet been acquainted with, look upon him as an Impostor, as the Devils Agent, who comes on purpose to disturb men in the good old way, through which the blessed Apostles, the noble Army of Martyrs, the excellent Saints in Primitive times, travelled to the New *Jerusalem*; and this head I cannot leave, till I have given you an account what one of the greatest Scholars this latter Age hath produced, says concerning this.

Hales's *Golden Remains.*

The effects of the Spirit (says he) as far as they concern instruction and knowledge, are not particular informations for resolution in any doubtful cases, for this were plainly Revelation; but as the Angel, who was sent to *Cornelius*, informs him not, but sends him to *Peter* to School; so the Spirit teaches not, but stirs up in us a desire to learn; desire to learn makes us thirsty after the means, and pious sedulity and carefulness makes us watchful in the choice and diligent use of our means. The promise to the Apostles of the Spirit of God, which should lead them into all truth, was made good unto them by private and secret informing their understandings, with the knowledge of high and heavenly mysteries, which as yet had never entered into the conceit of any man; the same promise is made good to us, but fulfilled after another manner; for what was written in their hearts by revelation for our instruction, have they writ in Books to us, for information otherwise than out of these Books, the Spirit speaks not: When the Spirit regenerates a man, it infuses no knowledge of any point of faith, but sends him to the Church and to the Scriptures; when it stirs him up to newness of life, it exhibits not to him an inventory of his sins as hitherto unknown, but either supposes them known

known in the law of nature, of which no man can be ignorant, or ſends him to learn them from the mouths of his Teachers; more than this, in the ordinary proceeding of the holy Spirit in matters of inſtruction, I could never deſcry: ſo that to ſpeak of the Spirit helping in private, either in dijudicating or interpreting of Scripture, is to ſpeak they know not what.

And truly till the World, eſpecially that part of it, whoſe underſtandings are of a more ordinary ſize, come to ſuch convictions as theſe, it is impoſſible but we ſhould be over-run with Doctrins of Devils, and it is very probable that ſome worſe Sect than that of the Quakers, if a worſe can come in their room, will e're long be at the door, in order to diſturb the minds of Credulous People, and to inſinuate ſuch Doctrins and Principles as tend to make them diſhoneſt and immoral.

And therefore if any fancies ſpring up in your heads, and you find your ſelves as it were ſmitten with it, and ready to adopt it into one of the moſt neceſſary truths to be believed and known, pray bring it to the touch-ſtone, to Scripture and right Reaſon; and there conſider what weight it hath in it, and what plea it can make in a ſober and rational way, for its acceptance amongſt the great things of God. And if men did but take this courſe, the world would ſoon be reduced to order, and every man would keep his place, and live in thoſe limitted dependencies, upon the judgments of other men that are neceſſary for them, conſidering the difference of mens education and improvements.

2. Another thing I lay down concerning this Divine Spirit under the Goſpel, and the aſſiſtances that it affords men of pains and diligence, is this; that it

works upon the intellectual part of man, and not upon the animal spirits of the body, the not understanding of which hath done a great deal of mischief to the world; for the more ignorant part of mankind, finding sometimes according to their fond affections they have for any person or thing, a great warmth upon their spirits, and a kind of eager fire burning in their bowels; all which arises from the present motion of their bodily spirits, increased by the strength of their fancy and imagination: Why alas, let the thing be never so dangerous and destructive, yet away they run with it, as if the whole interest of Jesus Christ lay at stake, and they care not what perils they expose themselves to, what losses they sustain, what hazards they encounter, nay nor what Authority they affront, so they may but see *Sion* happy, in the settlement of the present opinion they have conceived so great a kindness for; and their ignorance and their zeal together hurls them out of all considerations, and makes them deaf to all advice, and suspicious of any man as an Enemy to the Kingdom of Christ, who attempts their reduction to more calm and temperate thoughts.

But now certainly the Spirit of God, which comes with a design to refine the mind, and reform the manners of the Sons of Men, hath a better and more worthy subject to work upon than a company of confused spirits, hot and violent particles; which had they no superiour powers to give Laws to their motion, would like *Phaeton*, set this world of Man on fire.

No, no, the great design of this Spirit, is to mend that Soul which Christ died to purchase the life of: and certainly, when ever any man experiences its genuine operations, he finds a vast alteration in the state

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of his mind, his apprehensions of things are far different from their former selves, when he was under the command of lust and prejudice; he then better sees the nature of things, and those several excellencies that are in them; he pitches upon objects which are every way more agreeable to the delights, as well as necessities of his soul, than the husks he formerly fed upon: And that love he has for God is not founded in the temperature of his body, in some present glowings which arise from Rhetorical descriptions, but in a deep consideration of the Divine Attributes and perfections of those displays and communications that he bountifully makes of himself to the world, and his affections to the Lord Jesus are not fixed upon him barely upon the score of his Priesthood, because he fondly and fancifully expects to be saved by him; but he honours and loves him as his Lord and King, and testifies the truth of his love by submitting to his Authority, and resigning up himself to his will and pleasure: and the Mans delight in God, is bottomed in those rational satisfactions he hath had in a true performance of those duties, through which God communicates himself to the intellectual and rational part of Man.

Alas, those touches upon the animal spirits, are but flashes, and vanish in a moment, upon which score we read of several persons in the late confusions, who for a time made a great noise, and pretended to give as great a light to the world; in a moment after, the spirits flagged, and the course of their bodies altered, sunk into the dregs of Atheism and Prophaneness, and drolled upon Religion as the product of a few melancholy vapours from the head, and not of a rational consideration from the mind.

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Whereas had these men been brought to Religion by the exercise of their minds and reason, about the Doctrins and Truths of the Christian Religion, and by the help of Gods good Spirit, which never fails to raise and heighten the faculties, and to enlighten the object to such laborious men, they had continued constant to their profession, notwithstanding all discouragements; for rational satisfaction, conviction of mind and judgment, cannot be laid aside, but by great degeneracy and apostacy of mind, or else by something that out-weighs it in point of satisfaction to the contrary.

And this was the way the *Bereans* took; for though there was the greatest spirit in the World there, yet it is said, *they searched the Scriptures, whether those things were so or no*; that is, they made use of their Reason, to compare Prophesies with events, and thereby got the name of being more *noble*, and no doubt furnished themselves with a more full satisfaction: And St. *Paul*, (as his manner was) he went unto them, and three Sabbath days *reasoned with them out of the Scriptures*; that is, he appealed to their judgments and understandings, and not to their, or his own private spirit: whereby he intimates, that that is the great method of conviction, and that the work of the Spirit of God, when such things are offered to our reason, is to incline us to consider and pause upon the evidence that is in those arguments, and to fix our thoughts in such a manner, as not to ramble from what is proposed, but to look into the strength and force such and such Arguments are attended withal.

Act. 17. 11.

Act. 17. 2.

I say this, this is the great work of the Spirit; and to judge of the truth of the Spirits motions, by the warmth of our affections, and not by the true light of

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our underſtanding, is to get into a Labyrinth, out of which we cannot extricate our ſelves, but by being guided by the clue of our Reaſon; and there is nothing under ſuch deluſions as theſe, but a return to a mans ſelf, to an exerciſe of his intellectual powers, can ſave him, and prevent his being plunged over head and ears in ſin and Hereſie.

And therefore let warm *Enthuſiaſts* cry down the uſe of Reaſon in Religion as long as they will, and call us carnal Preachers, for adviſing men to underſtand the reaſon of their Religion. Yet for all that, I dare deſire all thoſe who read theſe Papers, to think themſelves Chriſtians upon no other account, than that they are convinced their Religion is the beſt in the World, both as to its grounds, and as to its deſign; and I dare aſſure them, that if they improve their minds by pains and diligence, they ſhall find conſtant ſtrength infuſed into their ſouls by this good Spirit of God.

3. Another thing I lay down concerning this Spirit, is this, that there is now nothing done by this ordinary Spirit of God, which works upon the minds of diligent men, which contradicts and gain-ſays whatſoever was ſaid or done by the extraordinary Spirit in the Prophets and Apoſtles; for the Holy Ghoſt is God, and ſo is Truth it ſelf, and cannot lie; and for any man to pretend he comes by vertue of a commiſſion received from him, and at the ſame time to ſpread abroad propoſitions of faith, or rules of life, which are not agreeable to what hath been already delivered down to the world, he ought to be rejected as a monſtrous Blaſphemer, a moſt vile Impoſtor, one that would thruſt the notion of a God out of the world, by rendering him contradictory to himſelf, changing his mind upon all emergencies, and making

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that matter of duty to day, which not long agoe he declared against with the greatest severity. And though one would think such a thing should never be done by any person that wears a mans head, yet God knows those loose and scandalous times, in which our Fathers and we have lived, give us too sad experience of it.

What do you think of those who pretend to be governed by nothing else but a light within them, and yet vent such Doctrins of Devils as these are? to wit, *That Jesus Christ is not God: That he died to be our example, and not a Sacrifice: That they themselves attain to such a perfection of degrees as to live without sin*: And that which wants not its aggravation; namely, *That the Magistrates have nothing to do to hinder them in spreading these loose and desperate Principles.*

And though I could name other Parties of men, who come not much behind in some bad Principles; yet I am resolved, seeing I am vindicating the true Notion of the Spirit that descended in the likeness of a Dove, to do it without any gall whatsoever.

Let me therefore intreat you, if at any time such thoughts arise in your souls, as are flatly contrary to Scripture, or the like suggestions are made to you by others, to consider thus much, that God cannot be deceived, neither can he deceive; and what he hath plainly given out as his will and pleasure, that you may readily entertain, assent unto, and live in the practice of, without any danger whatsoever; and still let holy Writ, with the help of the interpretation of wise and good men be your Standard to prove Doctrins and Rules by, and then I am sure you are safe.

4. The Spirit of God which now influences and acts the minds of men, is a Spirit of Wisdom and Under-

understanding, as well as of warmth and zeal; and when any man is acted truly by this Spirit, though it may beget in him such affections for things as may infuse a convenient courage, and cloath him with a necessary boldness: yet for all that, he is kept within his proper bounds, he runs not out to any excess, does nothing by vertue of a pretence to this Spirit, but what is very accountable to any person of true understanding. And whosoever he is that gives his passions leave to run before his judgment, that is acted by so preposterous a zeal, that he no sooner is impressed, but presently without consulting his considering faculties, he makes himself ready for the undertaking: though the man may mean well, yet he must not, he ought not to bring in the Spirit of God to patronize his follies; for whereſoever it rests, it (as I said before) teaches no new things, though it helps us in reflecting upon the old, and prompts to nothing but what is warranted to him by the evidence that is brought before his reason and understanding. And if it was not so, what strange and horrid things might be done by a pretence to the Spirit of God, what Murthers, and what Rapins, what invasion of other mens rights, and encroachments upon their liberties, and the like? And therefore 'tis very necessary, as well as expedient, for all Christians, who would be a credit to their profession, not to pursue any thing under a notion, they are spurred to it by the Spirit of God, unless they can give a sober, rational, and wise account, both to themselves and others, of the usefulness of the thing, of its conduciveness to some good purposes and designs; for still the Spirit of the Lord that is sent into the world on purpose to reform the minds of men, suggests no new things to them,

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but ſets on the old, which are already delivered from Holy Writ, and whether the Scriptures do not make us wiſe to ſalvation, whether we are not by them directed to every thing that is lovely and praiſe-worthy, I leave the moſt nice Critick to judge. Away then with thoſe men who are all fire, without any allay at all, whoſe heels are upon the go without any commiſſion from the Head; for theſe men are generally the ſhame and reproach of Chriſtianity, and expoſe it to a thouſand reflections, from men who judge of it only by what they obſerve in others: Away (I ſay) with theſe, and give us the man who ſits down and retires into himſelf, and doth nothing under a pretence of the Spirit of God, but what he can give a reaſon for; this man indeed travels in a ſafe road, ſtands upon a bottom that ſhall never fail, and builds upon a rock which the winds and waves cannot daſh in pieces; for Reaſon is the ſame now that it was from all eternity, and we cannot fall into any danger, ſo long as we do the beſt we can to do things wiſely, and with our underſtandings; and I am ſure we ſhall not wrong the Divine Spirit, to give him his due ſhare in any action that is begun upon this principle, and finiſhed by the influence of ſuch conſiderations, for he is called *the Spirit of wiſdom and underſtanding, of counſel and might*: That is, he is not a Spirit that puts men upon headlong actions, that countenances any thing that is ridiculous and fooliſh, that is not well thought of and debated beforehand. This Spirit leaves men to the full exerciſe of all their faculties, and after a juſt ſatisfaction, and an intention to purſue thoſe things we are ſo ſatisfied in, it gives us proportionable aſſiſtance; that is, it doth not do all for us, and we ſit ſtill; but when we

Iſa. 11. 2.

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do what we can, it lends us helps ſuitable to our infirmities and weakneſſes, and what is wanting in us, to do the work to Gods acceptation, this Spirit makes up: and ſo long as men are wiſe and prudent, and improve the powers of their ſouls by ſtudy and contemplation, ſo long they may expect the Spirit of God entring into their ſouls with all helps and aids agreeable to their neceſſities: And on the other hand, ſo long as men drive on fooliſh deſigns, and ſuffer themſelves to be acted by every plauſible Argument; why let their zeal be never ſo high and touring, never ſo hot and violent, yet I aſſure them their heat proceeds from the preſent temperature of the Body, and not from the concurrence of Gods Spirit; for ſtill I ſay it is a Spirit of wiſdom and underſtanding, and gives encouragement to no mans folly or indiſcretion.

5. Though the Spirit of God be a Spirit of Wiſdom and Underſtanding, where it comes and is truly harkned unto, yet it does not exclude the uſe of means in order to obtain that Wiſdom: and though I would wiſh my tongue might ſooner cleave to the roof of my mouth, than I would do or ſay any thing to the diſparagement of this Spirit, yet have I no warrant to tell lies in its behalf, or to ſpeak more for it than it hath warranted me to do; and therefore I ſay this Spirit conſidered under the notion of the ordinary Spirit, for the extraordinary is ceaſed, does not exclude the uſe of means in order to obtain Wiſdom; for ſtill God having given us faculties of mind capable of inquiring and knowing, and having obliged us to the uſe thereof, and promiſed a bleſſing upon the uſe thereof, certainly he would not prevent our labour and induſtry by an extraordinary influence,

when it might be done to all necessary purposes by the ordinary; no, no, we find this all along, that God never went out of the ordinary course of Nature, if it would do what he purposed without an extraordinary interposal: and when ever he wrought Miracles, it was in order to such convictions as dull Man could not receive without them.

And therefore for any sort of Men to think themselves wiser than all the world beside, purely because they are of a party, to whom they fancy the Spirit of God is alone married, is to argue themselves the greatest fools; for though it prompt men to nothing but what is Wise, yet it leaves men to the improvement of themselves in Wisdom, by exerting the powers of their own minds: and that man who does not take pains to increase his knowledge, who is not studious & thoughtful, I will warrant him shall be a Son of darkness, notwithstanding that great light within, he so highly boasts of; for it is not now as it was in the Apostles days, we have not things by Inspiration, but by diligence and labour; the not right understanding whereof, hath done a great deal of mischief to the world. For no sooner have some persons of little minds and slender thoughts, been brought over to a party of proud Men, who have monopolized all Religion to themselves, but presently they have set up for Censurers General of the rest of mankind, as Reprobates and Cast-aways, as men who have no share in the eternal Decrees of Heaven, as Scum and Refuse, and therefore fit for nothing but to give these conceited ones joy in the ruin and destruction of their Estates and Lives together; for if men did but believe the Spirit of God only assists them in every thing they know, and helps them to no rules of Wisdom

dom by private Inſpiration, but only encourages them in living up to thoſe they have learned already, there would be a great deal more modeſty in the world, and men would love more, and cenſure leſs.

Laſtly, Though the Spirit of God be a Spirit of Wiſdom, yet for all that, amongſt men that have this Spirit, ſome are wiſer than other; and the reaſon is plain, becauſe it does not by vertue of its operations, deſtroy mens natural parts, or thoſe acquirements they have made by different educations; and you may find two men that have an equal aſſiſtance from Gods Spirit, that is, have their affections equally raiſed to things Divine; and yet one of them is of a far deeper underſtanding than the other, becauſe he hath had the advantage of an education before the other. And the Spirit of God, though wherever it comes, it makes all men good, ſtrengthens all good purpoſes and reſolutions, yet it leaves them to their own thoughts to find out Arguments for goodneſs, and to improve in principles of Wiſdom.

And now for a concluſion. If any man ask me why I pitched upon ſuch a ſubject at this time, I anſwer, becauſe I thought nothing could more conduce to the peace of the Church, and to the preſerving the ſeveral ſubordinations of men, than the true and right ſtating of the Notion of the Spirit: For certainly did the People underſtand what has here been ſaid, Schiſm and Separation could not poſſibly have enlarged their borders as they have done; nor could Treaſons and Rebellions have found ſuch ſhelters and refuges as they have done. It was a falſe Notion of the Spirit

that

that brought in the Deſolations and Confuſions, the Murthers and Rapins of the late War; and by vertue of the ſame miſtakes, the common People ſtand ready to run away from all thoſe obligations that lie upon them, to be dutiful to the Laws of the Church, in which they live, and the ſubtle Deſigners, the cunning Crafts-men, never yet did their buſineſs with the common People by ſtrength of Argument and force of Reaſon, but by gilded pretences of a more than ordinary commiſſion from the Spirit of God; and in purſuance thereof, by uſing uncouth phraſes, ſuch as are out of the common road of ſpeaking, and thereby inſinuating into the Peoples minds, an opinion that they forſooth are acted by a more extraordinary Spirit than the reſt of the carnal World are acquainted withal. Whereas, let but theſe things be digeſted that I have named, and particularly that nothing is now done by this ordinary Spirit which contradicts what was done by the extraordinary, or that the Spirit now brings no new things to us, and we ſhall preſently return to ſober minds, and quiet and peaceable principles; then will God have his due, and *Cæſar* his: then inſtead of reviling Gods Miniſters, we ſhall give them honour ſuitable to the merits of their Functions; and with modeſty, ſo far as it is allowed by Proteſtant principles, ſubmit to their judgments without any pragmatical cenſuring of their more rational ſentiments: we ſhall then find, that we have no warrant from the Spirit to ſpeak evil of Dignities, to deſpiſe Authority, much leſs to rebel againſt them, becauſe they will not gratifie us in our more unreaſonable deſires; nor yet to leave the com-

communion of a Church for some fancied corruptions. No, no, let us but be guided by these considerations, and I make no question but we shall endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace, and follow after those things which make for peace, and whereby we may edifie one another. Which God of his mercy grant, *&c.*

FINIS.

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